

TO: Members of the Appropriations Committee

From: Patrick Fallon, Service Area Director of Community Justice, The Connection

Re: Appropriations Committee Public Hearing on *H.B. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.*

Date: February 22, 2017

Members of the Appropriations Committee,

The following testimony is presented on behalf of The Connection, Community Justice Division who are proud partners with Department of Corrections (DOC), Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch; and the countless lives positively affected by the services we provide. The Connection is a statewide human service and community development agency offering unique solutions to the problems of homelessness, mental illness, and substance use and community justice rehabilitation. Our agency supports the administration's criminal justice reforms made over the past several years.

These reforms provide a fresh approach to community justice which is proving effective. This is evidenced by the progress being made in reducing the state's crime rate and prison populations. A crucial component in this crime reduction is community-based, reentry and diversion services. As the state continues to implement ground breaking prison reforms it is imperative a continued investment is made in community services. The proposed one-million dollar cut to DOC community support services would be counterproductive in ensuring Connecticut's recidivism rates do not begin to increase. Our state's best interest is to sustain positive gains with regard to decreasing the overall prison population which lowers tax payer cost for criminal justice services. The state's nonprofit providers offer a far more cost effective alternative to helping ensure public safety than incarceration.

In 2016 The Connection served over 2,500 individuals through our partnership with DOC and CSSD. These services include a diverse array of programs including community release halfway houses, reentry scattered housing, as well as inpatient, and outpatient substance abuse and counseling programs for sex offenders. The goal of our partnership with DOC and CSSD is to increase public safety while decreasing recidivism rates. The recent data shows the work we are doing is effective in protecting public safety; as well as ensuring nonviolent offenders are successfully reintegrated into society as productive members of their communities and contribute to Connecticut's economy.

We have faith in the democratic process to develop the best state budget possible under these difficult of circumstances. As this challenging initiative is undertaken, we only ask that you take into account the overall cost of decreased funding to community-based, reentry and diversion services. Without these programs we may very well see an increase in crime rates and begin the cycle of incarceration rather than rehabilitation which is proven to be more costly for taxpayers and not effective in reducing crime.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these critically important issues. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time, with questions, or for additional information:

Patrick Fallon, Service Area Director of Community Justice

The Connection

pfallon@theconnectioninc.org , (860) 343-5500 ext.3003

www.theconnectioninc.org